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Highlights

of the

Upper Missouri National Wild & Scenic River Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail



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BLM—MT—AE—84—020—4333

In October of 1976, President Gerald Ford signed legislation that added the Upper Missouri River between Fort Benton and Fred Robinson Bridge to the National Wild and Scenic River System (see map between pages 15 and 16). The designation followed more than a decade of studies and debate about what should be done with the river, ranging from dam development by the Army Corps of Engineers to administration as a National Wilderness Waterway by the National Park Service.

The Bureau of Land Management was designated by the legislation to manage the Upper Missouri. Included in the area of their jurisdiction are 149 miles of river within a corridor that encompasses 131,840 acres of land. With a couple of exceptions, the boundaries of the Wild and Scenic River designation are the valley rims, or all area that can be seen while on the river. The exceptions are the areas between Fort Benton and Coal Banks Landing and within the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge. Along these two segments, BLM management is essentially restricted to the area between the mean high water marks.

The Upper Missouri was designated a component of the National Wild and Scenic River System because it was found to be an irreplaceable legacy of the historic American west. In the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (PL 90-542) Congress stated that: "It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the nation, which with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geological, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations." The Upper Missouri possesses all of these qualities. In addition, the river has since been included in the Lewis and Clark Historic Trail.

MISSOURI RIVER

Steeped in History

Each year several thousand people visit Central Montana to vacation on the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River. They come from around the nation and several foreign countries. They are attracted by the scenery, the solitude, the primitive setting, the ease with which it can be boated, and by the history.

The Upper Missouri is largely defined by its history. It was the homeland of Indians, the pathway of Lewis and Clark, the country of fur trappers and traders, the highway of steamboats, and the place of new beginnings and broken dreams as settlers attempted to tame and then to adapt to its environs.

Writers like Lewis, Clark, Maximilian, Larpenteur, Chittenden, and Schultz romanticized the river. Painters like Bodmer and Russell captured its beauty, character, and sweeping vistas.

For centuries the region was occupied only by Indians. The area to the west of the White Cliffs was the homeland of the Blackfeet, while the downriver area was inhabited by the Gros Ventre. Mountain tribes — the Kutenai, Salish, Nez Perce, Kalispel and Shoshone — came to the plains to hunt buffalo. The Crow often raided other tribes in the area from their homeland to the south.

Visitors to the river occasionally encounter reminders of these prehistoric residents of Central Montana. Archeologists study their campsites, hunting and butchering areas, stone tools and other features from the past.

“Corps of Discovery” Lewis & Clark

Besides being a wild and scenic river, the valley of the Upper Missouri is a component of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. The story of the “Corps of Discovery” is a fascinating true-life adventure story. It was a military expedition, and Lewis and Clark were the leaders. They were expected to be explorers, decision makers, mappers, botanists, zoologists, ethnographers, doctors, and peace makers with the various Indian tribes along the way.

The expedition was a result of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. This single action added some 500 million acres, west of the Mississippi, to the United States. Congress appropriated \$2,500 for the 3 year expedition, but bearing a “letter of general credit” from President Jefferson, Lewis spent a total of \$38,722 for the project.

The two captains never knew what to expect next during the 3 year expedition. The first year, 1804, was relatively easy. That part of the river had been traveled by traders and trappers for several years. They spent their first winter with the Mandan Indians in present day North Dakota.

While wintering with the Mandans, the captains hired Toussaint Charbonneau as an interpreter. It was a package deal — with the Frenchman came his young Shoshone bride, Sacagawea, and their infant son, Jean Baptiste, nick-named Pomp by the captains. The newcomers brought the expedition's size to 33 — including Captain Clark's slave, York. Scannon, a Newfoundland dog, also accompanied Captain Lewis.

The second year, the "Corps of Discovery" entered unexplored wilderness. As the expedition traveled west from the Mandan villages and into Montana, information provided by Indians proved to be remarkably accurate. The rivers were encountered about where they had been described, and the face of the country matched native descriptions and accounts. Mountains began to come into view in the proper places.

When the Milk River, called the "River That Scolds At All Others" by the Indians, was passed and the various unconnected ranges of the Rockies began to appear on the western horizon, the captains began to anticipate the discovery of the Great Falls of the Missouri beyond which, the natives had told them, lay the proper passageway to the Pacific waters.

They passed what is now James Kipp State Park on May 24, 1805, and camped for the evening about 3 miles above it. They were in six dugout canoes and two pirogues. They would travel through what is now the wild and scenic river area until June 13th.

The smaller of their two pirogues, the "White Pirogue," left Wood River, Illinois, loaded with some 8 tons of provisions. For the most part the boats were pulled with a rope (called cordelling) and poled up the river. At times the men were in the water up to their armpits, walking through mud that made it impossible to keep their moccasins on. To make conditions worse, it was near the height of spring run-off, and the weather much of the time included cold rain and sleet.

As they moved upstream, they noticed game becoming more scarce, but recorded several bands of bighorn sheep. From high on the north rim they caught their first view of the Rockies, a scene that at first thrilled, then sobered them with the realization of the toil that might be involved in crossing that snowy barrier. Captain Clark summed up their assessment of the badlands when he wrote: "This Country may with propriety, I think, be termed the Deserts of America, as I do not conceive any part can ever be settled, as it is deficient in water, timber, and too steep to be tilled."

Captain Lewis somewhat echoed Clark's record when he wrote after viewing the broad valley at the mouth of the Judith: "These appearances were quite reviving after the drairy (sic) country through which we had been passing." The Judith River, at first named "Bighorn" by Lewis, was afterwards renamed by Clark in honor of Miss Julia Hancock of Fincastle, Va., who later became his wife. She was but 13 years of age at this time, and by her friends was nicknamed "Judy."

Beyond the Judith the "Corps of Discovery" entered the White Cliffs section of the Upper Missouri. They were thrilled by the sandstone cliffs sculpted by time and the elements. They wrote, "The hills and river cliffs (sic), which we passed today exhibit a most romantic appearance ...," and described, "... elegant ranges of lofty freestone buildings, having their parapets well stocked with statuary ..." and "... seems (sic), of visionary enchantment (sic) ..." Of the igneous dikes Captain Lewis wrote, "... so perfect indeed are those walls that I should have thought that nature had attempted here to rival the human art of masonry had I not recollected that she had first began her work."

White Cliffs section of the Upper Missouri



The expedition reached the Marias River on June 2nd, and here the captains were faced with a serious geographical dilemma. According to their information, the Missouri had only one major northern tributary —the Milk or “Scolding” River that they had passed more than 3 weeks earlier. Was the Marias the true Missouri (the river described as having connections with the Columbia) and the southern stream an unknown tributary? Or was the Missouri itself the southern branch and the northern tributary a river the Indians had not mentioned?

The right answers to these questions would determine the fate of the expedition and Lewis and Clark began reviewing all their information and exploring both rivers. After more than a week of these efforts, not having discovered the Great Falls and against the judgment of the rest of the party, the captains chose the southern branch. They made the right decision, an advance party with Lewis reached the Great Falls on June 13th.

It took them about a month to portage around the falls and they celebrated the Fourth of July at White Bear Island. They were at Three Forks by late July, went up the Jefferson to the Continental Divide, crossed over Lemhi Pass, went down the Bitterroot and Columbia and wintered on the Oregon coast at Fort Clatsop.

The “Corps of Discovery” returned the following year, 1806, and when they got to Montana, Lewis came back down the Missouri and Clark explored the Yellowstone. After reaching the Great Falls, Lewis took a side trip to the north to explore the headwaters of the Marias.

The 1783 Treaty of Paris, which ended the American Revolution, stated that the northwestern boundary of the Northwest Territory would be determined by a line drawn from the northwestern-most point of Lake of the Woods (49° 37' N) to the Mississippi River. It was later discovered that the Mississippi River did not reach far enough north to satisfy that article of the treaty. After the Louisiana Purchase was finalized, one of the purposes of the Lewis and Clark Expedition was to find a tributary of the Missouri River that would satisfy this 20 year old treaty. Captain Lewis found that the Marias River did not reach far enough north and consequently he named his last camp on that river “Camp Disappointment.”

During their return to the Missouri, Lewis and the three men accompanying him were compelled to camp with a party of eight Blackfeet along the Two Medicine River the evening of July 26, 1806. They woke in the morning to find the Indians trying to make off with their rifles and horses. One, probably two, of the Indians were killed in the fracas that followed. Following the fight, the explorers traveled fast, long and hard to escape any further conflict. The four rejoined the rest of the Missouri River contingent, who had been making the Great Falls portage and retrieving caches left the previous year, near the mouth of the Marias. They turned downriver toward Saint Louis.

The Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River appears much today as it did when Lewis and Clark made their epic journey. Today’s traveler can camp in the same places as the “Corps of Discovery,” and can easily visualize the scenes described in the journals.

Fur Traders

During the years following the passage of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Blackfeet Indians showed such an uncompromising hatred for Americans that they effectively prevented the penetration of their territory by trappers. Their hostility has been attributed to the skirmish with Captain Lewis along the Two Medicine River. But the historian Chittenden in his *History of American Fur Trade* declares that Manuel Lisa found that the Indians of that tribe justified the action of Lewis but were generally inclined to be friendly to the whites. Chittenden suggests that the real cause of the Blackfeet animosity was the appearance of white trappers in the ranks of their enemies, the Crows, in a battle which occurred in 1807. Whatever the reason, the country of the Upper Missouri was closed to whites until 1830.

In the winter of 1830, Kenneth McKenzie sent a four-man party, headed by Jacob Berger, out from Fort Union at the mouth of the Yellowstone to the upper river in an attempt to capture some of the rich beaver trade of the Blackfeet for the American Fur Company. Berger had served with the Hudson's Bay Company at posts frequented by the Blackfeet on the south Saskatchewan. He was well qualified to accomplish McKenzie's goal. Berger spoke the Blackfeet language and understood their characteristics.

They discovered a band of Piegan, a branch of the Blackfeet, near the mouth of the Marias. Berger made a bold approach and was recognized by some of the tribesmen. Successful negotiations resulted. A party of 40 of the tribe were persuaded to accompany Berger to Fort Union.

The magnificence of Fort Union greatly impressed the Indians, and Berger led them in triumph to McKenzie. They were lavishly courted for their goodwill, and promised that a trading post would be established the following season at the mouth of the Marias.

Accordingly, James Kipp, a Canadian of German descent and a veteran of the fur trade upon the lower Missouri River, left Fort Union in July of 1831, with 75 men and an outfit of Indian goods. After a tedious, upriver voyage the party arrived at the mouth of the Marias River in mid-October and selected the point of land between the two streams for the proposed establishment. Seventy-five days later Fort Piegan was completed and open for trade.

During the first 10 days after the post was built, 2,400 beaver skins were traded. The Piegans would not permit a white man to set a trap in their country, but they were good beaver hunters themselves. Fort Piegan prospered, soon obtaining over 4,000 beaver pelts, as well as many other smaller furs.

The winter of 1831-32 was severe and the Indians were somewhat unfriendly. When spring came, Kipp could not convince his men to remain in Blackfeet country. All but three, Frenchmen who had married into a local Piegan band, returned to Fort Union with the pelts. After it was abandoned, Fort Piegan was burned.

Because of the rich haul brought back by Kipp, Kenneth McKenzie sent David D. Mitchell back upriver in the fall of 1832 to reestablish trade with the Blackfeet. Partway up the river Mitchell lost his outfit of Indian goods in a storm, and had to return to Fort Union for a fresh supply. The Indians upriver did not understand the delayed arrival and were angered, feeling that they had been duped by the white traders.

When Mitchell and his men finally arrived at the site of Fort Piegan, they found the ashes of the ruined post and several thousand hostile Indians waiting for them. Rather than rebuild Fort Piegan, Mitchell decided to relocate to a site 8 miles further upriver. At the new site, the peril of the situation was apparent to all. The Indians could easily have annihilated the traders and helped themselves to the trade goods. But by cajolery and an unbelievable exercise of tact and wisdom, Mitchell kept them placated until a new stockade was erected and the men were safely inside.

The successful establishment of the new post, Fort McKenzie, marked a permanent foothold in Blackfeet country. David Mitchell returned to Fort Union in 1833, and Alexander Culbertson replaced him as “factor” or chief trader.

At first, trade in this area was mainly in peltries, but when the silk hat came into vogue the market effected a gradual increase in the proportion of buffalo robes traded. The Indians were primed generously with whiskey before the trading began. Trade whiskey usually consisted of watered down alcohol that contained chewing tobacco and a generous amount of red pepper.

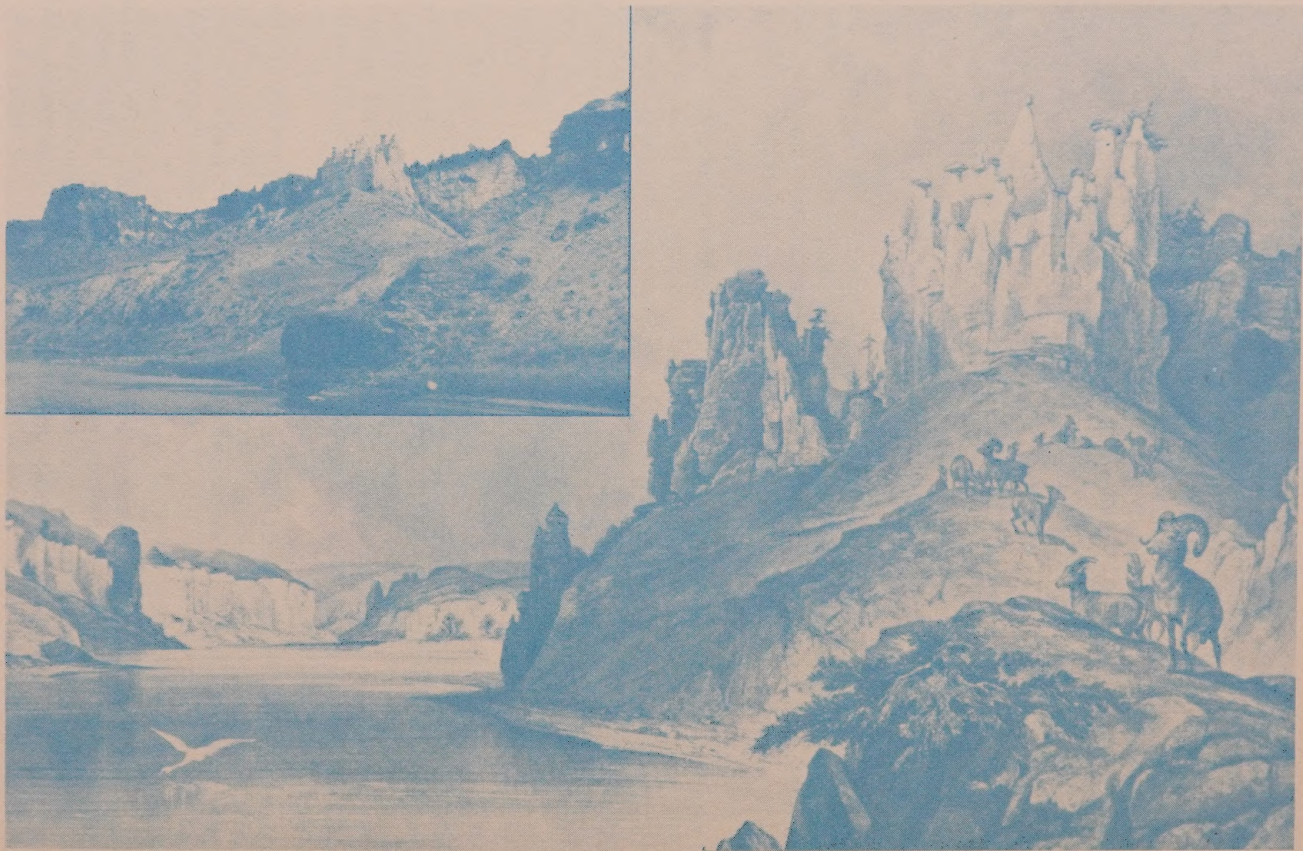
Alexander Philip Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied, a noted German scientist and explorer, visited Fort McKenzie for several months in 1833 while he studied the local Indians and collected plant and animal specimens. He was accompanied by the artist, Charles (Karl) Bodmer, who sketched and made paintings of the Indians and scenes in the surrounding countryside.

The two were a good team. Maximilian was an experienced naturalist, one of the “whole men” of 19th century Europe with deep interest in the natural and social sciences — and the money and position to indulge it. Bodmer, only 23 years old, had been superbly trained in Zurich and Paris, and his artist’s eye was a perfect complement to his patron’s scientific view. Bodmer’s vivid sketches and watercolors depicted not only Indians at peace and war, but also the sweeping vistas of the Upper Missouri and the wildlife that abounded there. Bodmer’s work was to give the outside world its first look at what would be Montana and at the fabled river that led there.

In 1842, Alexander Culbertson was reassigned to Fort Union, and he was replaced as factor at Fort McKenzie by Francois A. Chardon. Unfortunately, Chardon was a heavy drinker and was under the dominance of his volatile deputy, Alexander Harvey. Affairs at the post went well until January 1844, when a Blackfeet party sought admittance to the post. They were refused for reasons now forgotten and, in retaliation, killed livestock as they departed. Harvey, Chardon, and others pursued them. One of the members of the party was killed, which enraged the traders.

On February 19, 1844, Harvey and Chardon found an opportunity to even the score with the Blackfeet when a small band arrived at Fort McKenzie with robes for trade. As they clustered about the main gate, Harvey fired a small cannon loaded with lead balls into the group. Chardon fired on them with a rifle. There are several versions of how many were killed; one puts the number of slain Blackfeet at 30.

The massacre had a disastrous effect on relations between whites and the Blackfeet. Even at the time, many fur trade employees deplored the action of Harvey and Chardon. The site of Fort McKenzie became untenable as a result and was soon abandoned. Fort McKenzie was burned by either the traders or Indians, and to this day the site is known as Brule’ (burned) Bottom.



Karl Bodmer's chapel, 1833. Mile 57.2 N.

Soon after the Fort McKenzie massacre in 1844, Chardon and Harvey sent a party to establish a fort on the Missouri opposite the mouth of the Judith River. The fort, named Fort Francois A. Chardon (Fort F.A.C.), was built in great haste and secrecy. Situated on a main war trail between the Blackfeet and Crow and handicapped by Chardon's reputation, the new post was doomed to be a failure.

The drop in Blackfeet trade was strongly felt by the American Fur Company. In 1845, Alexander Culbertson was summoned from Fort Laramie to reestablish trading relations with the Blackfeet. From his service at Fort McKenzie and married to a Blackfeet woman, he was trusted by the tribes.

Because of its poor location, Culbertson decided to abandon Fort F.A.C.. Chardon and other employees were sent downriver to other posts. Culbertson gathered up the goods and supplies from Fort F.A.C. and used them to establish a new post, Fort Lewis, a short distance above modern Fort Benton. He also took great pains to make peace with the Blackfeet and to induce them to trade at his new post.

The following spring, Culbertson went downriver to Fort Union with the robes and furs from Fort Lewis. Arriving at the Judith, he ordered the now vacant Fort Chardon burned as a demonstration for the Indians of his contempt for the Fort McKenzie massacre.

The ashes of Fort Chardon had barely cooled, when a major peace council between the Blackfeet and the Flatheads was held at the confluence of the Judith and Missouri. It was arranged through the efforts of Fathers Pierre Jean deSmet and Nicolas Point. The Blackfeet regarded this region as their own preserve and frequently attacked the mountain tribes when they came here to hunt. They were, however, impressed with the success of the Flathead in battle, a success that was attributed to the medicine of the Blackrobes — Christianity. They met in September. An additional plus for the new allies was that they could now present a united front against their common enemy, the Crow.

Culbertson's location of Fort Lewis also proved to be unsatisfactory. Winter ice jams and spring floods made it inaccessible to the Indians. Consequently, development across the river and several miles below was begun. In the spring of 1847, the traders floated all movable fixtures of Fort Lewis down to the new post, Fort Clay.

At a Christmas party in 1850, Fort Clay was renamed Fort Benton. The name was in honor of Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, a strong political supporter of the fur trade. Fort Benton would thrive as a center of commerce. Here the Indians and white fur traders alike exchanged their pelts and hides for clothing, arms, liquor and other items.

In 1855, Fort Benton was to be the site of a treaty council between Isaac Stevens, Governor of Washington Territory, and representatives of most of the major Indian tribes in the region. Much of the groundwork for the council was accomplished in 1853 when Stevens was commanding an expedition to locate a northern railroad route across the plains and Rocky Mountains to the west coast. Stevens talked with Indians along the way and arranged for a great peace council at Fort Benton at a later date.

Stevens arrived in Fort Benton in July of 1855 and set about summoning the tribes. Gifts for the Indians were key to successful talks and were being shipped upriver by keelboats. By September, the boats with their supplies and gifts hadn't even reached the Judith, and Stevens decided to move the treaty talks to that location so further delay might be avoided.

The boats finally reached the Judith on October 10th. The delay meant that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of warriors simply drifted away in disgust or from hunger. Stevens had hoped for 10,000 Indians, but got 2,500 instead. There were Blackfeet (including the Blood and Piegan branches), Gros Ventres, Flathead, Pend d'Oreilles, Nez Perces, Crees and Snakes. The Crow had been invited, but did not attend. Most of the tribes were looking for assurances from the Blackfeet that would allow them to hunt buffalo on the plains without fear of attack.

The talks were successful. Treaty lands were defined, and the U.S. Government would be allowed to build roads, military posts, and telegraph lines within Blackfeet territory, and to navigate the river in return for annual annuities. Chittenden in his *History of Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River*, says of the Stevens' Treaty Council: "The Indians departed with their lavish presents. The era of the fur trader had ended and that of the Indian Agent had come."

Steamboats

The fur trade era stimulated the first extensive use of the Missouri River as an avenue of transportation. Keelboats, mackinaws, bullboats and canoes plied the upper river bringing trade items and returning with a wealth of furs. The vast amount of capital to be obtained encouraged steamboat captains to brave the treacherous Missouri. Steamboat navigation on the Missouri started in 1831, when a vessel name the *Yellowstone* arrived at Pierre, South Dakota, from St. Louis. The next year it got to Fort Union, on the present eastern boundary of Montana. Several other upstream efforts were made, and in 1859, Captain John LaBarge, accompanied by Charles Chouteau of the American Fur Company, attempted to reach Fort Benton. They fell only 12½ miles short of their goal, unloading the *Chippewa* at the former site of Fort McKenzie.

The following year they were successful. On July 2, 1860, the steamer *Chippewa*, followed closely by the *Key West*, reached Fort Benton and proved that the channel of the Missouri was navigable to that point. Navigability was established just in time to serve the gold camps which were about to open in southwestern Montana.

Another accomplishment in 1860 that served to enhance the development of Fort Benton was the completion of a trail heading west to connect the heads of navigation on the Missouri and Columbia Rivers. This was the 624-mile long Mullan Road. It crossed the Continental Divide near Helena.

Discoveries of gold in 1862 at Grasshopper Creek, in 1863 at Alder Gulch, and in 1864 at Last Chance Gulch put an entirely new picture on the development of Montana. The era of the fur trade was passing. The era of mining was beginning.

River traffic became heavy as steamboats brought men and supplies to the gold fields, and returned downriver with the products. In 1866, for example, Grant Marsh pointed the *Luella* downriver with a cargo of 2½ tons of Confederate Gulch gold dust. Valued at \$1,250,000, it was the richest cargo ever to go down the Missouri.



The steamboat "Rosebud"

White Invasion

Following the Civil War, the operations of the U.S. Army focused on the western frontier. As gold was discovered in the Rocky Mountains and as public lands were opened to homesteaders in the 1860s, emigrants moved west in ever-increasing numbers, intruding more and more on Indian territory.

Reacting to the white invasion of their lands, Indians retaliated by mounting small-scale, scattered, guerilla-type attacks on the emigrant trails. White settlers turned to the Army for protection. Regular army units were assigned to guard large, well-organized emigrant parties, and forts were established along major routes. Camp Cooke was the northwesternmost outpost along the Missouri. Established at the mouth of the Judith in July of 1866, it was the first military outpost in Montana.

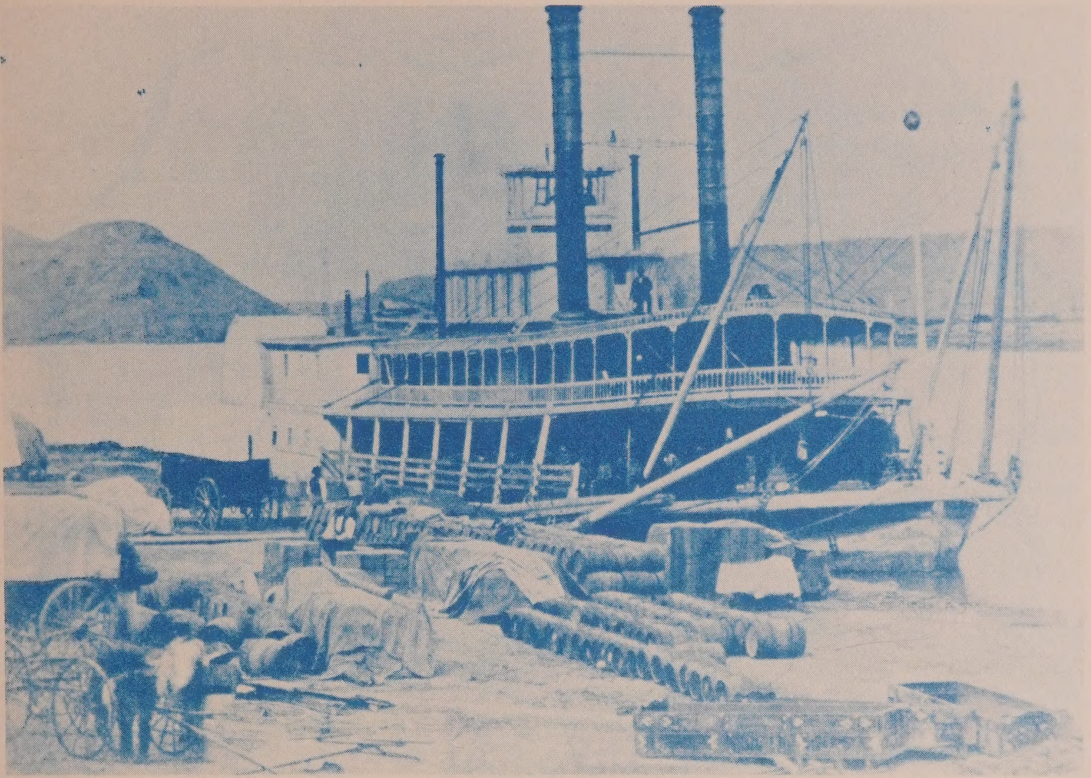
Exactly why Camp Cooke was located at the junction of the Judith and Missouri Rivers remains unclear. After being reinforced by 100 soldiers in 1867, Camp Cooke had a strength of approximately 400 men. However, once the fort was constructed, the men had little to do. Except for the high water months of May, June and July, steamboat traffic on the river was virtually non-existent. In fact, there was nothing for the Camp Cooke soldiers to protect. Throughout 1866 and 1867, indications are that the hastily-constructed fort began to deteriorate rapidly, along with the soldiers' morale. The post was plagued by an invasion of rats and numerous desertions by soldiers for the gold fields.

Camp Cooke's only "major" engagement with the Indians occurred in 1868. In April a small party of Sioux attacked the camp's horse herd, capturing 34 horses and mules and fatally wounding Nat Crabtree, a woodhawker living near the camp. The following month a war party of Sioux launched an assault against the fort itself. About 2,500 Indians lay siege to the fort for about 6 hours. There was only one casualty in the fort —Lieutenant Aumian shot himself in the foot.

Camp Cooke was abandoned by the Army on March 31, 1870. By then, much of the garrison had been transferred to Fort Shaw (between Helena and Fort Benton), and the public had begun to ridicule the post's inactive history. An inspection report that year concluded, "General neglect and indifference characterize this post. The small garrison merely holds on in spite of the rats. The Indians have moved away and left it alone."

One of the largest business firms engaged in the river commerce was T.C. Power & Bros. out of Fort Benton. One branch operation was a commissary adjacent to Camp Cooke. After Camp Cooke closed, they continued business as a trading post, Fort Clagett. Fort Clagett was the foundation upon which the large PN (Power-Norris) operation at the mouth of the Judith would be built.

Back at Fort Benton things were booming. Almost as exciting as the river traffic which brought commodities into Fort Benton was the transportation industry which carried the merchandise out. Stagelines, bull trains, mule trains, and similar methods of transportation were available for the commodities destined for points beyond Fort Benton.



The “De Smet” at Fort Benton (photo courtesy of the Montana Historical Society)

Ophir City was an attempt to rival Fort Benton for the steamboat business. It was to be built at the mouth of the Marias. Organized in 1864, the developers received a charter for incorporation from the Bannack Legislature in February of 1865. Construction was underway in May that year, when 10 woodcutters were massacred by Blood Indians. The dream of Ophir City died with the woodcutters.

Helena merchants decided to bypass Fort Benton in 1874. They developed Carroll, a freight station a few miles above the Musselshell River, and the Carroll Trail through Judith Basin to Helena. The Helena merchants finally gave up because of an untrustworthy agent, a band of Sioux on the prod, most decisively, Montana gumbo during a couple of wet springs.

Cow Island Landing was an alternate port during periods of low water. A commonly used fording area, Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce crossed the Missouri here in the fall of 1877 during their historic flight to Canada. The day before their arrival, the *Silver City* had unloaded 50 tons of military supplies and equipment at the landing. The Indians tried to negotiate for supplies, but when they were refused by the small detachment guarding them, they took what they wanted and burned the rest.

Coal Banks Landing was another steamboat port and the unloading site for supplies for Fort Assiniboine (near Havre). A military post, Camp Otis, was built at the landing to protect the steamboat shipments.

All Trails Lead Out of Fort Benton



"All trails lead out of Benton" was a familiar statement. The community was the anchor of the Mullan Road to Walla Walla. The Fisk Wagon Road to St. Paul through northern Montana and North Dakota was another. The road to Helena and other gold mining towns branched off from the Mullan Road. The Whoop-Up Trail led into Canada and was an important factor in keeping Benton prosperous.

In the early 1870s, mining declined. In 1871 only six boats made it to Fort Benton; four more made it to Cow Island. Traffic increased again, however, later in the decade as new markets were opened due to population growth in central Montana and southern Canada. One of the peak years for river traffic was 1878 when 51 steamboats made it to Fort Benton and 11 more to Cow Island. They brought over 10,000 tons of freight and departed with 1,863 tons for downriver ports.

The river would be the main avenue of transportation for the settlers, bringing them their supplies and equipment, and taking their goods to market for over a decade. Then during the 1880s, river traffic began to drop as the newly built railroads cut into the market. The driving of the silver spike in Fort Benton in September of 1887 signaled the end of the great steamboat era. The *Batchelor* unloaded 300 tons in Fort Benton on June 12, 1890, the last commercial cargo for that port. Army Corps of Engineers' boats, dredges and snag boats, continued working on the navigation channel until 1920, but the efforts were futile.

Today's river traveler is made aware of the steamboat era by places like Coal Banks Landing and Woodhawk Creek, names reminiscent of the search for fuel and those who sometimes risked their lives to supply it. Landmarks such as Steamboat Rock, LaBarge Rock and Pilot Rock bring to mind that very busy period. Maps of the river identify numerous rapids, but the "rapids," especially Dauphine Rapids, were hazards to steamboat passage and pose little danger to modern boaters.

Homesteaders

Other features along the river remind the traveler of those who've gone before. The remains of homestead cabins are frequently encountered. Most date to the early 1900s. Some settlement had taken place before the turn of the century, but by large livestock operators. It was the small farmer who sought out the bottom lands adjacent to the river. The Homestead Act of 1909 made it possible to file on 320 acres.

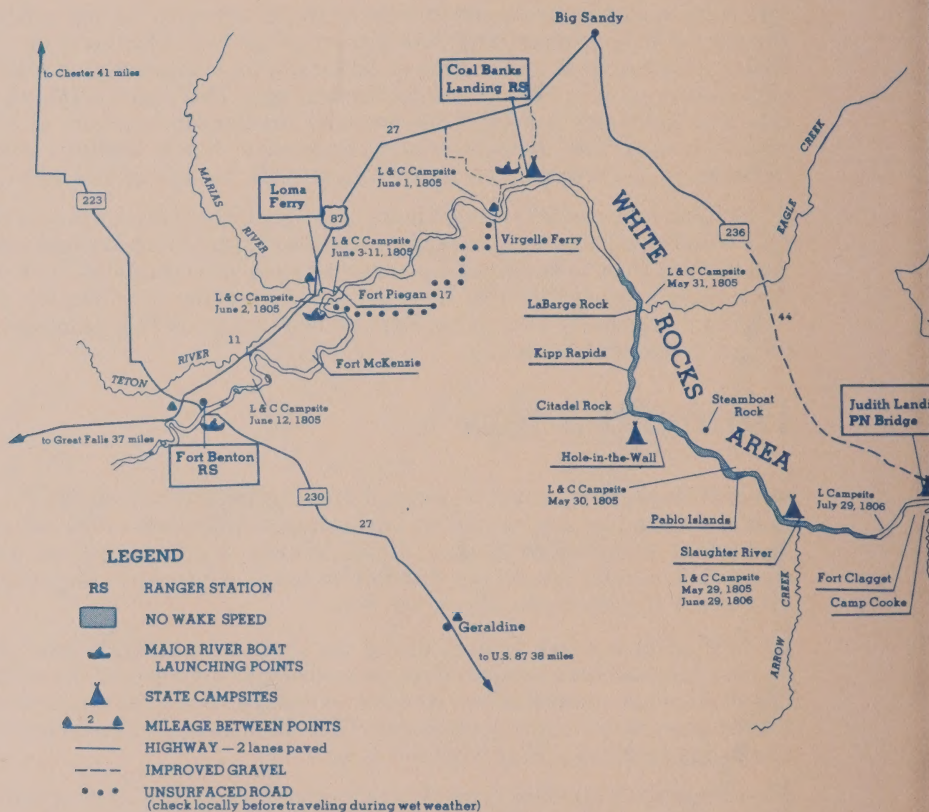
By 1916 almost every bottom along the river with enough level ground to make farming worthwhile had been settled. Then came drought between 1917 and 1922. Grasshoppers, hail, isolation, winter and summer weather extremes, as well as intolerance of much of the ground for the plow forced most settlers out. Their shacks and cabins stand along the river bank in testimony to dreams that were not to be.

The remains of another type of development along the river reveal another chapter in the history. The old Power Plant, just west of the Blaine/Phillips County line, reveals another chapter in the river's history. The area's coal deposits played a brief role in the development of gold mining in the Little Rocky Mountains. Early mills were powered by wood-fueled steam engines, but cordwood was in short supply after about 10 years and became too expensive for boiler fuel.

UPPER MISSOURI NATIONAL WILD & SCENIC RIVER



LEWIS & CLARK NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL



TRIP REGISTRATION — Boaters are asked to register at their launch point. This is for your safety (in case of severe weather, etc.), helps us locate you in case of a family emergency, and allows us to schedule our river work most efficiently. BLM River Rangers are normally stationed at the major launch points from the weekend before Memorial Day to the weekend after Labor Day to assist you.





Homesteaders cabin

The Ruby Gulch Mining Company mill in the Little Rockies was destroyed by fire in 1913. Having had a successful operation since 1903, the mine owners lost no time in building a replacement. The solution to their energy problem was a coal-fired steam-power plant near the river only 23 miles away. A lignite vein was opened and a 750 horsepower plant powered the mill from 1916-1918 and 1922-1923.

Events still take place which will have their place in history. For example, as good an east-west transportation artery as the Missouri River was, it has been just as formidable a barrier to north-south traffic. Over the years ferries were very important. Fort Benton had a ferry in 1875, and Judith Landing got ferry service in 1887. However, winter ice, spring floods, and low flows during the fall months all disrupted their operation. Until as recently as 1959, the only way to cross the river between Fort Benton, where a bridge was built in 1888, and Fort Peck Reservoir, built in 1937, was by one of the ferries. In 1959, Robinson Bridge was completed, but that still left 149 river miles with only seasonal and less than dependable north-south access. Then in the fall of 1982, the PN Bridge, a vital transportation link in Central Montana, was dedicated at Judith Landing.

Lewis and Clark recorded a lot of wildlife along the river. Several species, the buffalo and grizzly among them, are gone from the Breaks. Elk and bighorn sheep have been reintroduced, and the beaver is holding its own.

The forts of the fur trade and Indian conflict periods have essentially disappeared. While steamboats had stripped the valley of all burnable fuel, the trees have now returned to the bottom lands and hill sides. In many places crude foundations are the only reminders of the spoiled dreams of homesteaders.

In so many respects, the Upper Missouri today appears more like it did when it fascinated and awed Lewis and Clark 179 years ago than it appeared during the hustle and bustle of only a century ago. And, as a Wild and Scenic River, it should remain that way for generations to enjoy.

Statue of Lewis & Clark and Sacagawea at Fort Benton



NATURAL HISTORY

Geology

Many who visit the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River are lured there by the solitude and the unspoiled beauty available. A person can boat the river with little effort, can have a primitive experience without the physical exertion necessary to visit most of our nation's wilderness areas. This is a particularly attractive feature for senior citizens, families with young children, and the physically impaired.

The river presents to the view of the traveler many widely contrasting scenes. The wide, fertile valley below Fort Benton differs considerably from the scenic white cliffs down river from Coal Banks Landing. The stark, rugged badlands below Judith Landing present still another vista.

The valley of the Upper Missouri is a living museum, the product of many events over time. The land was originally laid down in horizontal layers, the sediments and shorelines of a great inland sea that once covered most of the Great Plains. These layers have since been folded, faulted, uplifted, modified by volcano activity, and sculpted by glaciers. Erosion then added to the variety we see along the river today, a landform known as the Breaks.

Erosion has cut down through the layers deposited by the great inland sea. The sea covered the area for about 10 million years, starting some 80 million years ago. The shoreline of the sea migrated back and forth across the area in response to climactic changes and shifts in the earth's crust. Marine deposits, materials that settled out of the water to the bottom of the sea, resulted in beds of shale. Just like the oceans of today, sandstone layers were deposited along shorelines and river deltas. The down-cutting of the river through this "layer cake" of sandstone and shale has thus exposed some 10 million years of geologic history. .



The layers did not remain in their original horizontal condition. In the area of the Bearspaw Mountains the layers were folded, pushed up by shifts in the earth's crust as mountain building took place.

Still later, volcanoes shook Central Montana, building the Highwoods and extruding molten material out on top of the Bearspaw and into cracks in the shales and sandstones. The uplifted sediments were unable to support the weight of the volcanic material, and the Bearspaw collapsed. The collapse of the mountains downward and outward folded and buckled the once horizontal shale and sandstone layers to a great depth for as far out as 35 miles from their base. Again, erosion has sliced the "layer cake" revealing for the river traveler clues to the tremendous forces that helped shape the landscape.

Erosion has also washed away the soft sediments from around the harder volcanic materials that were extruded into cracks in the shales and sandstones. Consequently, walls or "dikes" stand out from the surrounding bottom lands and valley slopes. At places, large intrusive plugs capture the traveler's attention. The black color of these volcanic features contrasts sharply with the lighter colored shales and sandstones.

Glacial Effects

Adding to the diversity of the scenery encountered along the river are differences in the age of the valley at various locations. The river has flowed through different segments of its current channel for different lengths of time. A broad valley with gentle side slopes demonstrates age. A narrow, steep sided valley indicates youth.

The valley below Fort Benton is the oldest segment. The Missouri flowed here prior to the glaciers. However, instead of turning to the southeast at Coal Banks Landing like it does today, it continued to the north of the Bearspaw Mountains and flowed down what is now the Milk River Valley and on to the Arctic Ocean.

The Judith River and Arrow Creek were tributaries of the pre-glacial Missouri, but they flowed in the opposite direction of today's current and joined the Missouri near Coal Banks Landing. Thus, through the White Cliffs there are some indications of maturity, but the pre-glacial valley was carved by a much smaller flow of water.

Between the Judith River and Cow Creek there were no major drainages prior to the glaciers. The valley here is narrow and steep sided.

Cow Creek and the Missouri below it was a pre-glacial drainage and a major glacial outwash area. The valley again widens here and the side slopes are not as steep as the valley above.

About one million years ago, the climate of North America became cold enough for thousands of feet of glacial ice to accumulate over most of Canada. Great pressures develop at and near the bottom of thick masses of ice because of the weight of overlying ice, and under pressure ice becomes mobile; it will flow somewhat like the spreading of a lump of soft wax. Consequently, the glacier spread itself outward from the centers of accumulation. Much of the ice moved southward into the United States, slipping and sliding over the surface.

The climate of North America fluctuated from time to time, and as a result the ice advanced southward into the United States and then melted back into Canada repeatedly. There were four major advances, the last two of which (first the Illinoian, then the Wisconsin) spread over the northern third of Montana's plains.

The first major effect of the ice flow was the damming of the north-flowing rivers. The thickness of the ice in Montana must have been 1,500 to 2,000 feet, because it left evidence of its presence more than 1,500 feet above the plains on the slopes of the Bears paw and Little Rockies. Large lakes developed in the river valleys in front of the glacier. As these lakes filled up, water spilled from lake to lake flowing eastward in front of the ice, and as it did it formed new channels.

With the melting of the ice between 10,000 and 15,000 years ago, and the filling of old valleys with debris carried in by the glaciers (drift or till), the rivers followed the new courses which they themselves had created in front of the ice. The Missouri had been pushed out of a channel which carried its waters to the Arctic Ocean into one that led to the Gulf of Mexico.

As you progress down the Missouri, the river cuts deeper into the surrounding plains. The valley varies in depth from around 400 feet near Fort Benton to more than a thousand feet in the heart of the Badlands. Consequently, a person would think that as you went down river that the geologic formations encountered would be getting older. However, the earth's crust in this area is tilted so that as you go down river progressively younger formations are encountered. Furthermore, the Bearpaw Shales in the area of James Kipp State Park were deposited during the last advance of the great inland sea, and the Hell Creek formation just above them marks the end of the Cretaceous Period — the "Age of Reptiles."

Differences in the age of the valley, its depth, and the geologic formations encountered all contribute to variety in the scenery along different segments of the river. Also adding to the scenic diversity along the river are differences in the types and locations of vegetation along its course.

Vegetation

Between Fort Benton and Coal Banks Landing, large groves of cottonwood, ash, boxelder and willow, known collectively with their understory of rose and snow berry as riparian vegetation, hug the river banks. The river terraces, bottom lands and valley slopes support mostly sagebrush and grass. The larger, more accessible bottom lands are farmed for hay and grains. High, sheer shale cliffs are found where the river is actively cutting into the valley slopes, and they are void of any vegetation.

As you approach the White Cliffs the cottonwood groves become smaller and farther between. Once in the White Cliffs though, evergreens appear in the side coulees and along the valley slopes. Erosion has broken down the sandstone and shale and mixed them into a soil that supports ponderosa and limber pine, Douglas-fir and juniper. River terraces and bottom lands continue to grow grass and sagebrush.

The scene again changes as you pass Arrow Creek. Grass and sagebrush dominate the scene. However, as you approach the Judith River pine makes its appearance along the valley rim.

In the area around the confluence of the Judith, large groves of cottonwood and its associated species are again found. Much of the bottom land is farmed.



A short way below the Judith the scene changes dramatically. The youthful valley is narrow, steep sided and deep. Grass, sagebrush and greasewood occupy the bottom lands, but there is not much bottom land. Cottonwood groves are often limited to just a few trees. The valley slopes are almost totally void of any vegetation. In a few places, tight lines of pine mark the location of thin sandstone layers across the slopes, the sandstone being the only place that the pine can get adequate moisture to survive. Pine is silhouetted along the valley rim, and in the bottom of some of the more developed coulees are found pockets of pine and juniper.

Passing Cow Creek the scene again begins to change. By the time you reach the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge the bottom lands are largely occupied by groves of riparian vegetation and the valley slopes are covered by pine.

Wildlife

The variety in vegetation, both along the river and across the valley, provides habitat for a diverse wildlife population. Shorelines, river banks, bottom lands, side slopes, coulees and the plains above each supply different types of food and cover to satisfy the needs of the different wildlife species.

Within the river itself are known to reside 49 species of fish, ranging from 1/2 oz. minnows to 140 lb. paddlefish. Fishermen are most likely to catch goldeye, drum, sauger, walleye, northern pike, channel catfish, carp and small mouth buffalo. Of the six remaining paddlefish populations in the United States, the Upper Missouri's appears to be the largest in average size. Generally only taken by snagging in the spring during upstream spawning runs, they are excellent table fare. Occasionally floaters may see these lunkers roll on the surface. Their diet consists of microscopic plankton filtered from the water. Other unusual species in the river are the pallid and the shovel nose sturgeon and the blue sucker.

Shoreline areas provide habitat for soft-shelled turtles, beaver and a wide variety of waterfowl.



Most important of the vegetative types in the river valley is the riparian zone immediately adjacent to the river bank. Riparian habitat like that along the Upper Missouri makes up less than one percent of the vegetative mosaic of the west, yet a greater variety of wildlife species depend upon it than any other vegetative type in the west. The riparian zone is a complex ecological community. It is fragile, but its survival depends upon many of the natural forces that at first glance appear to be quite harsh.

A dynamic and essential element of the riparian zone is the river itself. Both vegetation and wildlife in this area are dependent upon normal fluctuation in water height and silt load as well as upon the river's tendency to meander. High flows recharge groundwater to levels needed by riparian vegetation. Flood waters deposit nutrient rich soils across bottom lands. The meandering allows the river to deposit new gravel bars and build islands and new bottom lands to replace these that have become too high and dry for riparian vegetation.

Most of the 60 species of mammals, 233 species of birds, and 20 species of amphibians and reptiles known to inhabit the Upper Missouri River valley are dependent in one way or another upon the riparian zone. Among the more common and well known species are white-tailed deer and pheasant.

Between the riparian zones and the valley slopes are the bottom lands. One of the most common species living here is the prairie dog, a critter that is especially popular with visitors from outside the region.

The valley slopes and coulees provide for the needs of still another group of wildlife species. Commonly found in this area are mule deer and sharp-tailed grouse.

The plains above the valley are home to antelope and sage grouse.

A very special place in the cross-section of the river valley is the cliff faces. Nooks and crannies in the cliffs provide perching and nesting habitat for the many raptors that inhabit the river area. Among them are the sparrow-hawk, prairie falcon and golden eagle. Bald eagles visit the area during the late fall and early winter.

As stated previously, the valley of the Upper Missouri is a living museum. Regardless of whether a person's interests focus on geology, plant life, wildlife or the various combinations, the river valley has it all to offer. Almost all of Montana's colleges use the river as an outdoor classroom each year, and the subjects studied are as varied as the river's resources themselves.

The area is remote, rugged, inaccessible in most places except by boat, and often inhospitable. But, it also has its beauty and its opportunities for solitude and recreation in a primitive setting. All of these, together with the widely contrasting scenery, add to the charm that attracts thousands from around the nation and several foreign countries each year to Central Montana and to the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River.

Recreation

The Missouri River below Fort Benton has been used for recreation for as long as Montanans have turned to the out-of-doors for relaxation during their leisure time. James Willard Schultz came up the river in 1877. He was 17 years old at the time, and he went on to become an Indian trader. In 1901, he floated the river with his Blackfoot wife, Sah-ne'-to, for the pure enjoyment of it. He wrote about the trip, and the story was published as a series in *Forest and Stream*. A delightful tale, the series was published in book form, *Floating On The Missouri*, by the University of Oklahoma Press in 1979.

By 1956, the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce was organizing annual trips on the river between Fort Benton and Fort Peck. They celebrated their 20th annual cruise in 1976, our nation's Bicentennial, with a flotilla of 76 boats and 239 people.

Commercial outfitters made their appearance along the river in the mid-1960s. Among the first was a group of Fort Benton school teachers with a love for the river and the need for summer employment.

As the word spread about the recreation opportunities and the beauty and solitude to be enjoyed along the river, use increased. The debate over reservoir development vs. a wilderness waterway attracted a lot of attention to the river.



Just how much use was taking place during the 1960s and early 1970s, or the rate at which it was increasing, is not known. However, in 1975 BLM was able to station a college intern along the river to record the amount and types of use and to document peoples attitudes about how the river should be managed. That summer, some 1,650 people boated the river, spending nearly 7,000 days recreating along its course.

That same year, Senate field hearings were held in Billings on a bill sponsored by Montana's Lee Metcalf to designate the Upper Missouri as a Wild and Scenic River. Activities surrounding the legislation generated a great amount of interest, and the river received a lot of attention in the press and on television, including feature stories in several national magazines.

The publicity generated in 1975 had its effect on river use during the following year. During 1976, some 2,230 people spent more than 9,300 days boating the river. Hence, recreational use even before the formal designation increased 35% in just one year.

The designation of the Upper Missouri as a National Wild and Scenic River in October of 1976 made it possible for BLM to initiate a management program along the river. One of the primary drawbacks from the lack of management up to this time was the loss of natural and cultural resource values. Unique and irreplaceable rock formations were being indiscriminately toppled. Many items of historic interest around homesteads were being taken to be stored with private collections. Additionally, with the increase in use, visitor health and safety were becoming more of a concern.

The ability to effectively and efficiently deal with these and similar issues required that BLM work within a management plan — a document developed through a process that identified all the issues, explored all the alternatives to their solution, and weighed the consequences of each action. Along the Missouri this process was more complicated than just a recreation management plan. Unique to the National Wild and Scenic River System, the Missouri's legislation mandated multiple use management. Activities like grazing and mineral development are allowed, but they must not degrade the values which caused the river to be designated in the first place.

First among the planning priorities was meeting a Congressional requirement that within a year the river boundaries be defined and the various segments of the river be designated as wild, scenic or recreational. The type of designation depended upon factors such as scenic quality and the degree of naturalness. Together with the formulation of overall management objectives and policy, this planning was accomplished during 1977.

Developing the on-the-ground, nuts-and-bolts, comprehensive management direction was the task during 1978. Various inventories had been initiated as early as 1975. Inventories for all of the resources now had to be completed and the data sorted, interpreted and integrated to develop a clear and accurate picture of the use, condition and trend of the resources. As problems or potentials surfaced, management needs started to be identified.

However, this was just the first step. The attitudes and expectations of the visiting public and of the adjacent landowners, neighbors who would be directly affected by anything BLM did, had to be identified, weighed and incorporated into the planning. Consequently, public meetings were held in Great Falls, Helena, Missoula, Billings, Bozeman, Glasgow, Havre, Fort Benton and Lewistown. The nine meetings were attended by 349 people, and there was excellent participation at each meeting.

After a great amount of effort by everyone involved, coupled with a lot of give and take, the comprehensive management plan was completed in 1978.

Following the dramatic increase in use between 1975 and 1976, and with projections that this use would continue to increase at a fairly rapid rate, BLM began a conservative management program along the river even before the planning was completed. The planning was a complicated and time consuming process, and the attitude was that BLM couldn't sit idly by and watch any further loss in resource values while waiting for the planning to be completed. Furthermore, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act provided some guidance.

The opinion of most people associated with the river regarding the unnecessary wear and tear on the resources was that it wasn't necessarily due to malicious or vandalistic behavior. Rather, it was more because some people did not understand the long term effects of abuse, or that they lacked an appreciation for the resource values, both human and natural, found along the river.

Consequently, among the earliest efforts was an attempt to meet with as many boaters as possible at the launch points, before they got on the river, and to discuss the cultural and natural history of the river with them — to point out the fragile, often irreplaceable nature of the resources.

River Ranger at work



This was the beginning of a seasonal river ranger program. From the onset, it has been the foundation upon which the river management program is built. During the planning years, two river rangers were stationed along the 149 mile long river corridor to meet with and provide assistance to visitors. During this same period, management and supervision were provided from within the existing capability of the District's Judith Resource Area.

In 1980, the management plan having been completed and approved, a full time staff of three professionals (a manager, a planner/interpretive specialist, and a lead ranger) was organized for the river. Since the river corridor includes portions of three resource areas (Judith, Havre, and Phillips), they were assigned to the District Manager's staff.

Tho their numbers have varied, the seasonal staff continues to be the most important part of the river management program. To provide full time coverage at the major launch and take-out points, as well as to provide a reasonable number of river patrols, eight river rangers are needed. With the tight budget situation in recent years, half that number has been the norm.

One of the more attractive features about the Upper Missouri is that float trips of various lengths are possible. Boaters have a choice of launching at Fort Benton, Loma, Coal Banks Landing, Judith Landing, or Stafford Ferry. They can get out of the river at any of the above or go on to James Kipp State Park. Consequently, trips of from one to seven or more days are possible, depending upon the time available and the interests of the boater. The variety in trip options complicates the management program. River rangers can only be stationed at the major launch/take out points and then only during the periods of greatest activity.

A number of factors influence the ranger's duties. As already mentioned, the need to increase visitor understanding of the nature and value of the resources is high on the list. Experience has shown that with a better understanding comes a greater appreciation for the resources, and the result is better treatment.

Coupled with the challenge of resource protection is the responsibility for the health and safety of those using the river. The river is an easy river to float, and as such it attracts many beginners. Also, the ease with which it can be boated makes it attractive to senior citizens and the physically impaired. However many of the same factors that discouraged homesteaders along its course can result in very dangerous situations.



BLM keeps a jet boat at Coal Banks Landing for search and rescue assistance

The Missouri River corridor is a place of environmental extremes. Mid-afternoon temperatures can hover around the 100 degree mark, while an evening thunderstorm can drop temperatures to the mid-40s. For the ill prepared, either extreme can be deadly. Hypothermia, especially, is a concern among those who know the river.

While on the river, valley rims often conceal the approach of bad weather. A suddenly appearing thunderstorm can whip the river's placid waters into boat swamping waves. Also, up-river winds can bring down-river travel to a stand-still.

Cottonwood groves are the favored camping spots, providing shade, fuel, and pleasant surroundings. However, the river valley funnels the weather, and gale force winds often tear apart the brittle cottonwood trees.

There are many attractive hiking opportunities along the river, especially within the White Rocks. However, sandstone provides very poor footing. The presence of rattlesnakes and ticks are also among the hazards for which one should be prepared.

Two of the most common errors along the river are not securing boats properly when hiking or camping and not allowing enough time for the trip.

Adding to the risk from any of the foregoing is the distance to help —most of the river lies in remote, rugged country.

Another factor that influences the ranger's duties is BLM's responsibility to its neighbors along the river. Of the 131,840 acres within the management corridor, 34,160 acres, or 26% of the area, is privately owned land. Many of the landowners are happy to let floaters hike or camp along their land. Others are openly hostile. In fairness to both the floaters and the landowners, one of the management program's goals is to solicit respect for the landowners wishes.

Keeping all of the foregoing in mind, the rangers try to visit with each group going on the river. Sometimes the toughest part of the job is striking up the conversation. The rangers want to be of assistance without intruding or offending.

Launch site activities are geared around registering each group going on the river. The registration provides a record of who is on the river, when and where they launched, how long they are going to stay, where they are taking out, and what type of boat they are using. The information collected is important for a number of reasons. If a severe storm hits part of the river, the rangers want to know if anyone was in the vicinity — if so, a check will be made to see if they are okay. If a party is overdue, having their itinerary helps direct search activities to the most likely locations. If there is an emergency at home, having the itinerary makes it possible for BLM to quickly relay the message to the effected group.

The registration also provides BLM with information on the amount of use taking place. This helps schedule activities like campsite maintenance in an efficient manner.

During the course of the visit the rangers go through a number of mental exercises. For example, they discretely inspect a party's outfit, checking for items that might be needed. Among the most common deficiencies are not enough drinking water and no rain gear.

The rangers also try to judge the boating and camping skills of the party. If it appears that they lack experience, the conversation is directed along lines that will hopefully help the group avoid frustrations and have an enjoyable time. It is not uncommon for the rangers to even give canoe lessons.

The rangers also make available printed material like the "Floater's Guide" and a "Float Trip Checklist." They provide each group with litter bags to encourage "Pack It In — Pack It Out" for garbage — the bags have messages on river etiquette and river safety printed on them as a constant reminder for the boaters.

The latest weather reports, the location of navigation hazards, and, of course, information on the resources round out the services available from the river rangers at the launch points.

These services are also available when the rangers are encountered during a river patrol. Patrols are scheduled on an irregular basis. Campsites are checked and cleaned-up when necessary. Through the terms of a cooperative agreement, campgrounds developed by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks are included in this work. The rangers monitor the condition of a number of resources along the river, especially archeological and historical sites. In addition to their recreation related duties, they assist other BLM programs with activities such as monitoring livestock use, noxious weed control, and wildlife inventories.

When visitors to the Upper Missouri listen and show their appreciation, the river ranger's job is enjoyable and rewarding. However, when river users express indifference, or even hostility, the job can be disappointing. Groups whose obvious goal is to see how much liquor they can consume during their float trip are especially discouraging.

All too often when the ranger's advice is ignored, the result is a search and rescue action. When weather is the culprit, the rangers often risk their own lives to rescue the group that wouldn't listen in the first place. The sheriff departments of the various counties along the river are responsible for search and rescue, but by their presence along the river the rangers are most often the closest forces and make the initial response. Coordination with the counties, especially Chouteau, is close in this area.

During the seven years since the Upper Missouri's designation as a National Wild and Scenic River, there have been a number of significant accomplishments to enhance the boater's enjoyment or to improve BLM's management capability. Among them have been publication of a "Floater's Guide," acquisition of several key tracts of land, and the development of management facilities.

The "Floater's Guide" consists of river corridor topographic maps printed on high quality, water resistant paper. It is printed in full color and at a scale of one inch to the mile. Other features include land status, the location of cottonwood groves and developed campgrounds, and river mileage marks. Travelogue type narratives cover topics such as history, wildlife, geology, river safety and floater preparation. Numerous photographs with identified locations are included to help the floaters orient themselves.

Priority for land acquisition has been placed on properties with high value recreational and historical or archeological features. All acquisitions have been with willing sellers. The land transactions have been made by several methods. Four tracts of land totaling 1,317 acres were simply purchased. Another tract of 385 acres was acquired by exchange, the trading of lands with equal values. A tract in Fort Benton, the former Voyageur Art Gallery, was acquired for an administrative headquarters through a three-way exchange.

The exchange process has also been used to acquire a 3,296 acre "scenic easement," a transaction whereby the land stays in private ownership, but the landowner agrees to certain restrictions on his use of the land for the purpose of preserving wild and scenic river values.

The administrative headquarters in Fort Benton leads the list of management facilities that have enhanced BLM's management capability. The structure is ideally located along historic Front Street and near the boat ramp. It includes room for exhibits, office space and ranger quarters. A small warehouse has been developed at the site for storing gear and maintaining equipment.

At the launch sites, self-registration boxes have been installed for those periods when the rangers are absent. Information brochures, such as a "Float Trip Checklist," are dispensed from these boxes.

The river between Fort Benton and Coal Banks Landing is the area of greatest conflict between landowners and boaters. Within this reach campsites have been signed to help resolve this problem.

There is very little recreational development along the river, and public input during the planning favored keeping campsites primitive. However, at the more popular sites human waste has become a problem, both in terms of health and aesthetics. BLM is placing toilets at these sites.

A number of the historic structures along the river have been deteriorating rapidly. Once the roof goes, the structure is soon lost. Consequently, one project along the river has been restoring roofs and windows as a first step toward preserving these links with the past.

Also along historic lines, a "River History Digest" is being developed and should be ready for use during 1984. A rather comprehensive document, it will be checked-out to river users like a library book. All of the historic information is keyed to the "Floater's Guide" map mileage, and it is presented in a site by site format.

One of the more exciting projects along the river has been the reintroduction of bighorn sheep. This has been a cooperative effort with private landowners in the area. Twenty-eight sheep were released in the Breaks in 1980, and they appear to be doing good.

Among BLM's goals for the future is an effort to improve communications with the visiting public — to do a better job of soliciting proper treatment of the resources and encouraging safe use of the river. The two characters on the following page are one step in that direction. We believe that you can accomplish more with eye catching presentations and humor than you can with dry lists of do's and don'ts.

We'd like to do more interpretive projects like the "River History Digest." Other topics include the geology, paleontology, wildlife and vegetation along the river. To help us accomplish this goal an effort will be made to organize a cooperative association similar to the natural history associations that work with most of the national parks.

Not much development is planned for the river — this is in keeping with public opinion. One site where development is planned is at the mouth of the Marias River. Located just a mile from US Highway 87, on-site interpretation of the many historical events that took place here is appropriate. This is also a popular launch point, and some recreational facilities are needed.

Out along the river itself, about the only development that is planned is providing a few more of the popular campsites with toilets. Drinking water at a couple more locations is also badly needed.

Cottonwood reproduction has been a nagging problem. As older groves break-up, they are not being replaced adequately. Research is under way in cooperation with the US Forest Service Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, Ogden, Utah, to try to find ways of getting new cottonwoods started.

Over riding everything is the goal of managing the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River for its continued use and enjoyment, to preserve the beauty, solitude, and unique natural and cultural resources for us, our children, and our children's children for generations to come.

Have a FUN, SAFE trip!



